


**BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

In the Matter of the Public Reprimand )  
of the Educators Certificate of )  
Harold M. Hilton )  
Certificate 161164 )

**CONSENT ORDER  
OF PUBLIC REPRIMAND**

**SUMMARY OF THE CASE**

The South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on December 12, 2007. On June 29, 2007, the State Department of Education (Department) sent a notice of the possible action against his South Carolina Educators Certificate (certificate) to Harold M. Hilton by certified mail, restricted delivery, and return receipt requested. Mr. Hilton received this notice as evidenced by a signed postal receipt dated July 2, 2007. Mr. Hilton requested a hearing on the matter, but subsequently agreed to resolve this matter without a hearing by agreeing to the following terms: (1) a public reprimand will be issued by the State Board, (2) this public reprimand will be reported to all school districts in South Carolina with the grounds listed as "unprofessional conduct," and (3) this order will be posted on the Department's web site and shall be maintained as a public record in the Office of General Counsel of the Department. After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to issue a Consent Order of Public Reprimand on the terms set forth above.

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12/5/07  
Harold M.  
Hilton  
#161164

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

Mr. Hilton holds a professional educator certificate in Science and has over sixteen years of teaching experience. He was employed by the Berkeley County School District (District) as a Science teacher at Timberland High School (School). Mr. Hilton resigned from his employment, effective May 31,

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2007, following an investigation into allegations that he acted inappropriately towards a student.

On March 5, 2007, Mr. Hilton was conducting an experiment in class using a balloon to demonstrate static electricity. Mr. Hilton asked a student if he would participate in the experiment by allowing Mr. Hilton to rub the balloon on his head in order to show the class how the creation of static electricity would cause the student's hair to stand up. The student told Mr. Hilton that he did not want to participate and that he would pop the balloon if Mr. Hilton attempted to rub the balloon on his head. Later during the class period, Mr. Hilton caught the student off guard and attempted to rub the balloon on the student's head. The student then tried to pop the balloon with his pencil. Mr. Hilton grabbed the student by the wrist and then placed his hands on the student's throat. Mr. Hilton released the student and called the student a "jackass." Mr. Hilton submitted a written statement to the School's principal admitting to calling the student a jackass. Mr. Hilton stated he was frustrated and angry with the student and that what he called the student just "popped out." The student also gave a written statement that included information that Mr. Hilton grabbed him by the wrist and then his throat in addition to calling him a jackass. The principal then had Mr. Hilton supplement his original statement to include that he had placed his hands on the student's throat. Mr. Hilton supplemented his statement by writing that he jokingly held his hand to the student's neck pretending to hold him by the throat and that he was barely touching the student. Mr. Hilton also wrote that he would never consider holding a child in that way.

Mr. Hilton was placed on administrative leave pending further investigation. The principal reported the incident to the School's resource officer who submitted an incident report to the law enforcement division. No criminal charges were filed against Mr. Hilton regarding the incident. On May 1, 2007, Mr. Hilton voluntarily resigned his teaching position, effective May

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31, 2007, and entered into a Settlement Agreement and General Release with the District.

#### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

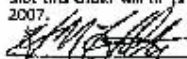
The State Board of Education may, for just cause, either revoke or suspend the certificate of any person." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (2004), S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2004); 24 S.C. Code Regs. (Supp. 2006). The Board finds that the substantial evidence presented supports its conclusion that just cause does not exist to suspend or revoke Harold M. Hilton's certificate; however, just cause does exist for a Public Reprimand of Mr. Hilton's conduct. Accordingly, the Board issues this Consent Order of Public Reprimand as set forth above.

South Carolina State Board of Education

  
John Tindal, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina  
December 12, 2007

I, Harold M. Hilton, SC Teaching Certificate # 161164, have read the Consent Order of Public Reprimand, consisting of three pages, and I freely and voluntarily agree to the terms set forth therein. I understand that this Order will be presented as signed to the State Board of Education on Wednesday, December 12, 2007.

  
Signature

12/5/07  
Date